

John M. Kleeberg
American Numismatic Society
Broadway at 155th St.
New York, NY 10032

May 20, 1997

Dear John:

Thank you for sending me the draft of the Neiswinter article. As you know Frank VanZandt is upset over certain alleged inaccuracies as to the information Neiswinter has been furnished. I wrote VanZandt that I would try to straighten the matter out without causing any serious problems. I advised you and Marie of my feeling.

I find the Neiswinter material important and interesting. It needs a great deal of editing and some correction. I return herewith my preliminary comments on the copy you sent me. I hope they are helpful. I have kept a copy of the draft.

I cannot find the photographer's name on the plate copy sent or on my own plate. Where is it? The plate copy sent seems to have "Cent Inventory Levick" in vague writing at the bottom.

I found that some of Crosby's early photographic plates for his 1875 opus have both written and printed pasted on labels. I see no proof or logic that the printed label was first used in the Levick plate before the written identification.

The fact that the strawberry leaf cent and the Smith alterations are together in the Levick material leads me further into my view of the possibility that the strawberries are all mid nineteenth century alterations of genuine worn early cents. Because some of the 4 known strawberry cents seem to show an identical die I believe someone (probably Smith) could have cut a crude die and struck that die on a worn (or buffed on one side) genuine cent. Then he could tool both the new die struck side and the remaining design on the other side of the original coin. The striking on one side would help flatten the coin on the opposite side. Finally he would buff down both sides to create an artificial worn appearance. He could have made both an obverse die and a reverse die but used only one of them. He only made a few strawberries because they were of terrible quality. If it was Smith he soon decided to tool genuine pieces without using any new die and thus the routine Smith "counterfeits" were created. The Smith "counterfeits" were much more appealing than the strawberry creations.

I think that the motive of whoever made the strawberries and the Smith counterfeits was the same - to give collectors more examples or more varieties. There could be no motive to counterfeit cents for circulation and no motive to try to get a Mint contract with such terrible examples as the strawberries.

I feel that Smith graduated from producing worn appearing strawberries to beautifully appearing "extremely fine" 1793s which looked like normal pieces.

REJECTED CROSBY PLATE IV

This state of Plate IV has the coins identified by separate printed labels pasted upon the background before the photograph was exposed. The plate number and other text are prepared in the same manner. This practice was used in the preparation of Plates II and III. On some exposures these labels were unreadable and such plates were rejected and not used. Their original wide margins remain.

To improve Plate IV the label for the plate number was moved out of the photo area and pasted into the top margin but the pasted in coin labels and other text were removed. Then the photo was exposed, following which the coin numbers and other text were printed onto the exposed sheet. Finally all pasted on labels were eliminated and the plate number, coin numbers and other text were printed onto the exposed sheet.

These changes required the height of the photographic portion of the sheet to be shortened about one centimeter to give adequate space for the plate number printed in the top margin.

The bound volumes contain the above different states of Plate IV except that none seem to contain the original rejected plate with unreadable labels.